ANEMONES AND RANUNCULUS--FIRST GARDEN WORK OF SEASON

Ranunculus bulbs or roots are frequently planted in the autumn as soon as they are received. I prefer to plant them in the early spring, as soon as the frost is out of the ground.

Ranunculus are not quite as hardy as the dealers' catalogues indicate. If planted early in the autumn, so they may get a start before the ground freezes, they may be all right if well covered with rough straw to prevent continual thawing and freezing.

A sunny, sheltered location suits them best, in a fairly light rich soil, well drained.

A layer of sand should be placed under each root when they are planted to prevent decaying.

My opinion is that most failures with ranunculus are caused by too deep planting. From one to two inches is deep enough. These plants growing naturally grow among the grass, quite like daisies or dandelions and they are very pretty when naturalized that way.

Anemones may be treated in the same manner but should be planted on their sides if the gardener is unable to tell which side should be up.

For indoor culture ranunculus should be planted as soon as they arrive in the autumn. Plant in pots or bulb pans, six bulbs to a six inch pot.

The soil should be fairly rich, with a little leaf mould and sand added, being sure to provide plenty of drainage in the way of pieces of broken pots in the bottom of the pots. A layer of sand under each bulb will tend to prevent decay. Cover to a depth of one inch. Then place in a dark place under a bench in the conservatory or in a warm cellar until they begin to grow. When growth starts the plants should be brought to the light.

Be careful to avoid overwatering, as the plants are subject to damping off. They must not be forced, as they will not stand coddling. Forty to forty-five degrees at night, with a rise of eight to ten degrees during the day.

Ranunculus do well in a greenhouse with sweet peas, mignonette or any other cool house plant, but are less trouble and give better results planted out in beds or in the benches.

Anemones may be treated in a similar manner, only they are best grown in pots only. In the benches they make too many leaves. They can stand more heat than ranunculus but must have plenty of water when they become established.

GEORGE FERGUSON.

George Ferguson is superintendent of the Payne Whitney estate. The numerous awards received at various exhibitions of flowers and vegetables is evidence of his experience and skill in gardening.

C. E. Bauman of Rahway, N. J., has grown choice anemones under glass for the New York market. This year, on account of the war, it has been impossible to get good, sound bulbs and the results have been disappointing.

Mr. Bauman's system has been to pot the bulbs as early as possible and to keep them shaded in the greenhouse until good root growth has been made. The plants have then been set out in benches of earth in a cool greenhouse. Judicious watering Mr. Bauman considers the key to success. That is a matter only to be learned by experience.

Ranunculus give good results under the same treatment.

GETTING AN EARLY START IN THE GARDEN.

Our growing season is comparatively short, but it can be considerably prolonged by means of the hotbed, cold frame and by utilizing a sunny window of the kitchen or living room.

Early plants of tomato, cabbage, peppers and eggplants can be started in shallow boxes in a sunny window if a hotbed or cold frame is not available. String beans, cucumbers, melons and sweet corn can be started in old cigar boxes. First bore a few holes in the bottom of the boxes for drainage and cover the bottom with cinders and then fill the box with light, sifted soil to within half an inch of the top. Have the soil moist, but not wet, before sowing the seed. A pane of glass over the top will keep the soil from drying out, but this must be removed to give the seedling air as soon as they appear. Even with the glass over the box the soil may require moisture, which must be supplied very carefully.

When the plants have formed one or two true leaves in addition to their seed leaves transplant them to another similar box of rich soil. Set the plants two inches apart each way. They can probably be allowed to grow in this box until they are ready to set out in the garden. The plants must have light and air to keep them strong and stocky. Long, lanky plants are undesirable.

The best time to set the plants out in the garden is after sundown, pouring a little water about the roots of each plant, then draw a little dry earth up around the plant to prevent the soil from baking. Water the boxes of plants thoroughly before removing the plants.

After the plants have been set they should be shaded for a few days by turning a flower pot over them, raising the north side up a little with a stone or clump of dirt for ventilation. An old shingle can be set at an angle over each plant to shield it from the sun. Old strawberry boxes turned over the plants afford protection from the sun. Save the old strawberry boxes every season for this purpose. Large plants, such as tomatoes and asters, can be shaded by turning old peach baskets over them for a day or two after they have been set out.

FERTILIZING LAWNS.

The last of February or early in March is a good time to begin work on the lawn, so the alternate night freezing and thawing of the ground may be taken advantage of.

Ground bone is one of the best fertilizers to use, and tankage gives good results. Prepared sheep manure is good and cotton seed meal, where it may be had at a low price, is also excellent. Wood ashes are good to use with all of these fertilizers or some other fertilizers containing potash. Alphano humus is another good fertilizer for lawns.

In cleaning up the lawn do not begin the work too soon or a lot of footmarks will be left in the turf.

Clean up the litter by hand picking, if this is possible, if not use a wooden tooth rake.

As soon as freezing weather is over fresh grass seed should be sown, and it is only by repeated applications of grass seed that a good lawn can be produced.

Use one pound of grass seed to each piece twenty feet square for the first seeding and from a quarter to a half of this amount for reseeding.

For the northern part of the United States Kentucky blue grass and redtop are standard, with about one-tenth of the quantity white clover. Most of the seedsmen have good mixtures of their own.

Some gardeners prefer to sow grass seed while the ground is freezing a little each night and thawing in the daytime, and believe they get a better lawn by this method than by sowing the seed on land where it will not be quickly covered.

After the lawn has been cleaned and seeded, give it a good rolling as soon as the turf is dry enough so the roller, in passing over it, does not sink below the general level.

There is a shortage of gladioli bulbs in England. Permission has been asked of the Government to import them from Holland or America.

1. Border of Anemones. 2. Anemones. 3. Ranunculus.

A wash has been recommended for apple tree borers made from raw linseed oil and pure white lead. Remove the earth for four or five inches from the base of the tree, scrape off the dirt and loose bark scales, and after worming the burrows with a wire apply to the exposed trunk a thick uniform coating of the paint to a distance of about a foot from the ground. If this paint is effective for peach borers it will no doubt prove equally so against peach and other borers. Do not depend on the fruit to the neglect of thoroughly worming the trees with a wire.

SPRING PRUNING.

Grapes should be pruned and the work completed by the middle of March.

Prune back last year's wood until there are only a few buds left on it. A shoot will start from back of these buds in the spring, and each shoot will bear three or more bunches of grapes. The amount of last year's wood to leave depends upon the strength of the vine. The usual vine will have four or five branches, which should be cut back until they are not over four feet long. A strong vine should not be permitted to retain more than a quarter of its last year's wood.

Peach trees should be trimmed so they will be low headed and spreading. The upper part of the limbs must come off every year to keep the tree down. Be careful to cut off all dead and diseased wood.

Very old peach trees may be revived by cutting the heads back to mere stubs. In a year or two an entirely new growth will be formed which will be vigorous, and if headed back will produce a good crop of fruit.

All dead and dried peaches should be carefully removed from the tree and burned.

Two illustrated lectures of special interest to amateur gardeners in the vicinity of New York city will be given in Schermerhorn Hall, at Columbia University, on Friday, February 14, by Prof. M. G. Kains, lecturer on horticulture. At 4:15 P. M. Prof. Kains will speak on "Growing Fruits for Home Use," and at 8:15 P. M. his subject will be "Improving the Home Vegetable Garden." Both lectures are open to the general public.

Prof. Kains for years has preached fruit growing to the farmers of New York and the New England States and is well known for his books on horticulture and his frequent contributions to the horticultural press. Prof. Kains is a practical gardener and fruit grower.

UNDER FALSE COLORS.

An English garden magazine in a recent issue under the heading, "U. S. War Garden Secretary Wants to Know," states: "Before leaving New York, P. S. Ridsdale, secretary of the National War Garden Commission of Washington, who is visiting this country to study the system of allotments, said that the great amount of added area England has placed under cultivation is an incentive to the food producers of America," &c.

It is plain from the heading of the article that the English people are led to believe that Ridsdale is a representative of the United States Government, which he is not.

The so-called National War Garden Commission is purely an independent organization, having no appointment or commission from the United States Government.

Mr. Ridsdale, the secretary, has been requested by one of the secretaries of the United States Department of Agriculture to change the misleading name of the organization, but has declined to do so, preferring to have what benefit there may be from operating under a title which misleads and deceives. No good can be expected to come from an organization willing to lend itself to deception or operating under it.

DAHLIAS AS CUT FLOWERS.

By GEORGE L. STILLMAN.

Not until recent years have dahlias been looked upon by florists as a commercial flower. When one stops to consider the type of dahlias grown in the days of our grandfathers it is no wonder they were not used extensively for decorative purposes. In those days the blooms were diminutive in size and of a flat or oval shape, except a few of the show or ball shaped dahlias. Even they were very small and of colors that were not desirable for the florist's use.

At the present time there are quantities of those ancient varieties grown throughout the country in private gardens by those who perhaps have never seen the newer creations.

Believing the dahlia could be developed to a much higher standard and become a very useful commercial flower, enterprising florists and gardeners by experimental hybridizing have achieved results which were astonishing even to themselves. They have succeeded in producing the large peony flowered and the decorative dahlias which have created so much enthusiasm.

Blooming as it does at a season when there is practically no other flower in market the dahlia has proved itself a winner. During the year 1918 it was demonstrated beyond doubt that the dahlia possesses decorative qualities as a commercial cut flower, surpassing in range of colorings and beauty. It was thoroughly demonstrated during the rage of the influenza in the fall of 1918 that dahlias were a most suitable flower for funeral work, as well as for other decorations. Numerous beautiful funeral pieces made up of the new types of dahlias, for which high prices were paid, came under the observation of the writer.

Not only have florists found that dahlias as a cut flower possess varied qualities for their use, but the general public, who have seen the many uses to which this flower has been put, have become thoroughly in love with dahlias. To grow the new popular kinds is the height of their gardening ambition.

It cannot be said that the florist is the only person deriving benefit from dahlias as cut flowers. Many women are now taking up dahlia growing for pastime as well as for profit. Here is one instance where a profitable business was started by an enterprising woman. In 1917 she started selling cut dahlias and sold $25 worth from the few she was growing for her own use. The next year, 1918, her sales amounted to $118 from the plants grown from the natural increase of the bulbs from the year before. Besides being a profitable business it furnished outdoor recreation, worth far more than what was derived in money value. This is only one of many instances where women with small gardens are making a good income by growing dahlias for cut flowers.

SEEDS TO SOW IN HOT BEDS.

In hot beds during February seeds may be sown of early cabbage and cauliflower, onion, parsley and radish.

In March lettuce, early beets, tomato and any of the seeds mentioned in the paragraph above.

In April sow pepper, cucumber, melon and any of the seeds mentioned for February and March sowing.

According to Sir Harry Veitch in France alone 175,000 acres have been devastated by German barbarism. At least 500,000 fruit trees will be required to replace those wantonly destroyed and he believes it will be best to get them from French nurseries.

Much of the ground is foul and will not be fit for planting for a long time.

In addition to fruit trees, seeds are greatly needed and implements.

Belgium was the centre of European gardening, but transport difficulties there are enormous. He went from Bruges to Brussels, seventy miles, and it took twenty-six hours by rail, showing the fearful state of the railway tracks.

Giving the prices of seeds in Belgium, Sir Harry said leek was about $145 per pound, onion seed the same price and another seed which in normal times was 12 cents a pound, was $40 a pound.

INFORMATION REGARDING NEW PLANTS WANTED.

New varieties of plants frequently happen, simply as freaks of nature. A sowing of tomato seeds may develop one plant that will produce fruit quite distinct from all the others, and if the form, color, productiveness or flavor make it superior to its parents it may be worth carefully saving and multiplying by saving the seeds and increasing the stock in this manner. This variation or difference in character from the parent is likely to occur in any vegetable—cabbages, potatoes, beets, radish, onion, cucumber and others. The method of increasing the stock may differ with different plants.

The variation is not confined to edible plants and is perhaps most frequent in flowering plants. All of the annuals show marked differences to a close observer—asters, phlox, zinnias and all the others. Other plants raised from seeds—dahlias, gladioli, iris, peonies, &c.—seldom come true or produce the same flower as the parent.

Plants like roses and carnations sometimes "sport," that is throw out a branch producing flowers very different from the parent. All this is true of fruit plants—strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, currants, &c., and of the pomaceous fruits, apples, peaches, cherries and plums.

Sometimes fruits and flowers of new varieties have remained for years in the garden where they originated before some one brought them to the attention of the public. If there are desirable varieties of plants anywhere, better than those listed by seedsmen and nurserymen, THE SUN Garden Department would like the particulars.

The annual midwinter meeting of the Michigan State Horticultural Society will be held at Fennville February 11 and 12. James Nichols of South Haven is president of the society. The Hon Charles W. Garfield of Grand Rapids is still an officer and an active member.

If the groundhog theory is correct look out for severe weather. Certainly the old fellow saw his shadow very clearly last Sunday.

"The Home Fruit Grower," by Prof. M. G. Kains, is an unusually valuable book for amateurs, briefly covering about every phase of fruit growing, including nuts of various kinds that may be grown in America. The work is profusely illustrated, in fact much of the story is told by the pictures. It is one of the most interesting of the six works on horticulture produced by Prof. Kains. A. T. De La Mare Company, New York.

"The Garden Blue Book," by Leicester B. Holland, describes more than 200 hardy perennials. Its distinguishing feature is a color chart showing at a glance the height, time of flowering, color of the bloom, preference for sun or shade or wet or dry soil, fragrance, keeping qualities of flowers when cut.

A page is devoted to each plant, setting forth its character, description, cultural directions and a photographic reproduction. Doubleday, Page & Co., Garden City, N. Y.

Old potting soil from greenhouse pots or benches makes an excellent dressing for lawns that are subject to burning in the summer. Mix well rotted manure with the old potting soil. See that the whole is well pulverized and scatter it lightly over the grass plot. After a few weeks brush the lawn with a birch broom and the top dressing will disappear.

American Pillar, Dorothy Perkins and similar roses should be cut back to about one foot when planted. Train up the new growth so it will become well ripened and next year it will bloom abundantly.